



THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
MASSACHUSETTS SENATE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS
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SENATOR THERESE MURRAY

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Dear Colleagues:

In crafting its budget recommendations for Fiscal Year 2006, the Senate Committee on Ways and Means sought to balance the needs of our citizens and our cities and towns with the financial realities facing the Commonwealth. This is a challenge that, I believe, we have met.

The Committee presents to the membership of the Senate a budget proposal that is balanced, focused on historic Senate priorities, and worthy of your consideration. In the pages following this introduction, you will find illustrations of the Senate's continued commitment to health care, public education, and assistance to cities and towns.

The Commonwealth must cope, however, with the realities of a federal government whose financial commitment to these very issues continues to diminish. This decline complements the steepest collapse of state revenues in our history. Our recommendations seek to address this reality.

One of the most obvious challenges we are facing is the soaring costs of health care. This is most unmistakably visible in the dramatic increases in health care spending through the state's Medicaid program and the Uncompensated Care Pool. These costs make the need to pass health care reform, and exert more control over costs, increasingly urgent in the immediate future.

Public education, a hallmark Senate priority, has undergone consecutive years of funding shortages. In this document, we turn the tide and move forward on a path that aims to bring additional assistance to education programs for children from their earliest stages of development through their years in our institutions of higher learning.

Our cities and towns across this great Commonwealth continue to be challenged by competing demand for services in all areas of municipal government. We support our partners in local government by acknowledging the importance of the various state programs that assist with their goals of providing quality, efficient services to the people they serve.

Even with the challenging financial constraints before us, this budget proposal lays a solid foundation for funding programs and services that seek to increase the quality of life for all Massachusetts residents. The Committee holds true to its mission of adopting only those measures that are within our capacity to fund given anticipated and projected revenues.

An in-depth and exhaustively detailed budget proposal such as this is the work product of incalculable hours of effort by both the membership and staff. I would like to thank my colleagues in the Massachusetts Senate and the Committee Members and staff of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means for their invaluable contributions which comprise these recommendations.

For the Committee,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Therese Murray", written in a cursive style.

SENATOR THERESE MURRAY
Chairwoman
Senate Committee on Ways & Means